DEVELOPMENT-HUMAN SECURITY NEXUS

A Study on Padma Bridge Resettlement Areas

Razia Sultana
Md Rafid Abrar Miah
Nahian Reza Sabriet
Md Nahiyan Shajid Khan
&
S M Mehedi Ahsan

BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES (BIISS)

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Chapter 4

Development and PMB: Issues of Sustainability at National and Regional Levels

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Ragib Mahmood Shuvo

4.1 Introduction

The establishment of the PMB in facilitating connectivity, trade, and tourism industry in the country have far-reaching implications for development. Hence, in this regard, this chapter discusses the development potentials of the PMB. It is examined how improved travel time due to PMB affects the transport connectivity at the national and regional level and how this improved transport connectivity has ramifications on economic activities. The comparative analysis of the two scenarios (one in which the PMB has not yet been constructed and the other one related to the post-construction phase) enables the study to determine the direct influence of the PMB on strengthening connectivity. This chapter also investigates the role of PMB in accelerating the development of urban neighbourhoods in Bangladesh in terms of tourism, trade and commerce.

It is well recognised that improvement in transport infrastructure is a key driver of spatial development.[167] It ensures the movement of people and goods as well as influences the amount and accessibility of economic activity on the ground. Improved accessibility encourages the living and commercial activities in its vicinity which led the adjacent sites to be transformed from rural landscape to urban landscape.[168] In the Randstad of the Netherlands, for example, transport accessibility had a consistent influence on the spatial distribution of urbanisation.[169] Similarly, in India, improvements in transportation infrastructure in a region attract economic sectors. The development of this sector has also enabled the growth of new urban centres, such as Gurgaon—a city in southwest New Delhi—has become a hub for the Information Technology (IT) industry.[170] On the other hand, a 1 per cent expansion in the overall length of rail lines in Kazakhstan resulted in a 17.2 per cent surge in exports and a 17.6 per cent rise in imports.[171] Being one of the significant infrastructural projects of the country in recent years, this chapter, therefore, seeks to explore the developmental ramifications resulting from the establishment of the PMB.

4.2 National Connectivity

PMB has established a link between the capital and southwestern region of the country, by effectively integrating the ports, capital and urban centres and

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[167] Fan. *et al.*, "Evaluating the Temporal and Spatial Urban Expansion Patterns of Guangzhou from 1979 to 2003 by Remote Sensing and GIS Methods," *International Journal of Geographical Information Science* 23, no. 11 (2009): 1371–88; Also see, Tie-Ying Liu and Chi-Wei Su, "Is Transportation Improving Urbanization in China?" *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences* 77 (October 01, 2021): 101034.

[168] Marc Antrop, "Landscape Change and the Urbanization Process in Europe," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 67, no. 01 (2004): 9–26.

[169] Dena Kasraian, Kees Maat, and Bert van Wee, "The Impact of Urban Proximity, Transport Accessibility and Policy on Urban Growth: A Longitudinal Analysis over Five Decades," *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science* 46, no. 06 (2019): 1000–17.

[170] Tuhin Subhra Maparu and Tarak Nath Mazumder, "Transport Infrastructure, Economic Development and Urbanization in India (1990–2011): Is There Any Causal Relationship?" *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 100 (June 01, 2017): 319–36.

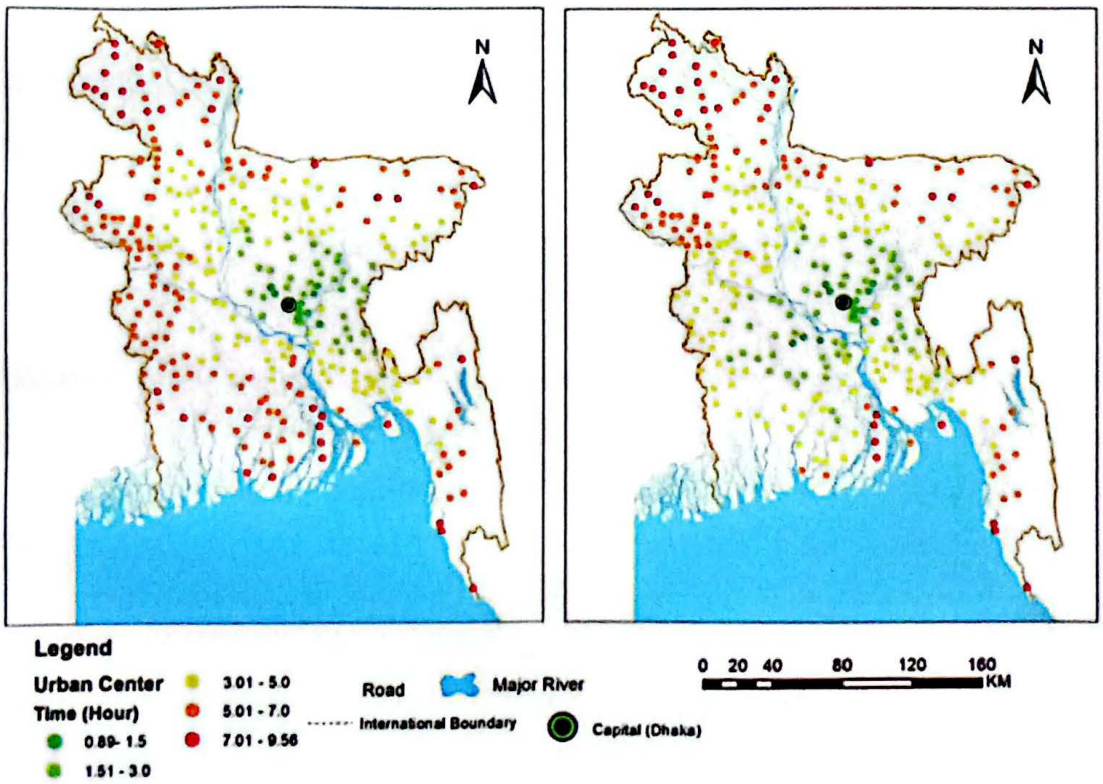
[171] Dina Azhgaliyeva, "Economic Impacts of Transport and Energy Infrastructure Connecting Asia and Europe: An Introductory Article for the Special Issue," *Asia Europe Journal* 19, no. 01 (December 01, 2021): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-021-00629-z.

economic zones. It has also connected the less developed southwest region to the northern and eastern regions of the country.

4.2.1 Connectivity to Urban Centres from the Capital

PMB has greatly improved transportation and connectivity between urban centres and the capital city in Bangladesh. Prior to the construction of the bridge, crossing the Padma River was a challenging and time-consuming task, which often led to long waiting times for ferries and launches. This resulted in a heavy load on the roads and added to the travel time, making it difficult for people to travel and trade to the districts across the river. As shown in Figure 4.1, with the construction of PMB, the journey time between urban centres and the capital has been reduced significantly, from between 5 to 9 hours to between 2 to 5 hours.[172] Urban centres here refer to both district headquarters and upazila headquarters, which are administrative units in the country.

Figure 4.1 Connectivity to Urban Centres from the Capital (left: previous scenario, right: present scenario)[173]



[172] Derived from the KII with UNO Shariatpur Sadar, and the Assistant Engineer of PMB.
[173] Developed by BIP Research Team, 2022.

As shown in Figure 4.1, the capital became closer to the southwestern urban centres: Khulna, Bagerhat, Jessore, Satkhira, Narail, Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenaidah, Magura (under the Khulna Division); Barisal, Pirojpur, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna and Jhalokati (under the Barisal Division); and Gopalganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Shariatpur and Rajbari (under the Dhaka Division). Figure 4.1 demonstrates that it took 5 to 9 hours earlier to reach Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenaidah, Narail, Gopalganj, Barisal, Pirojpur, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna and Jhalokati from the capital. Now the journey time is reduced to between 3 to 5 hours.[174] It has become easier and less risky to transport perishable fish from the coastal districts which has opened a new dimension in the trade. Additionally, this has led to substantial savings in travel time costs, which account for 23 per cent of the total benefits estimated from the project.[175]

4.2.2 Transport Connectivity

As shown in Figure 4.2, PMB reduced the distance between the capital (urban centres) to seaports (Mongla Port and Payra Port) and land ports (Benapole Port and Bhomra Port). For instance, the distance from the Indian border at Benapole to Dhaka via road transportation has been reduced by 70 km, resulting in a travel time reduction of almost 2 hours.[176] This is a significant improvement in transportation efficiency and cost reduction for businesses that rely on shipping products to and from the capital.

Furthermore, the PMB project has led to a substantial decrease in travel time to Payra and Bhomra Ports, saving time by almost 3 hours. This has further facilitated the shipping of goods and provided an opportunity for doing business by establishing a more robust connection with the capital city. The decrease in travel time has enabled businessmen to save time and money, making them more competitive in the market.

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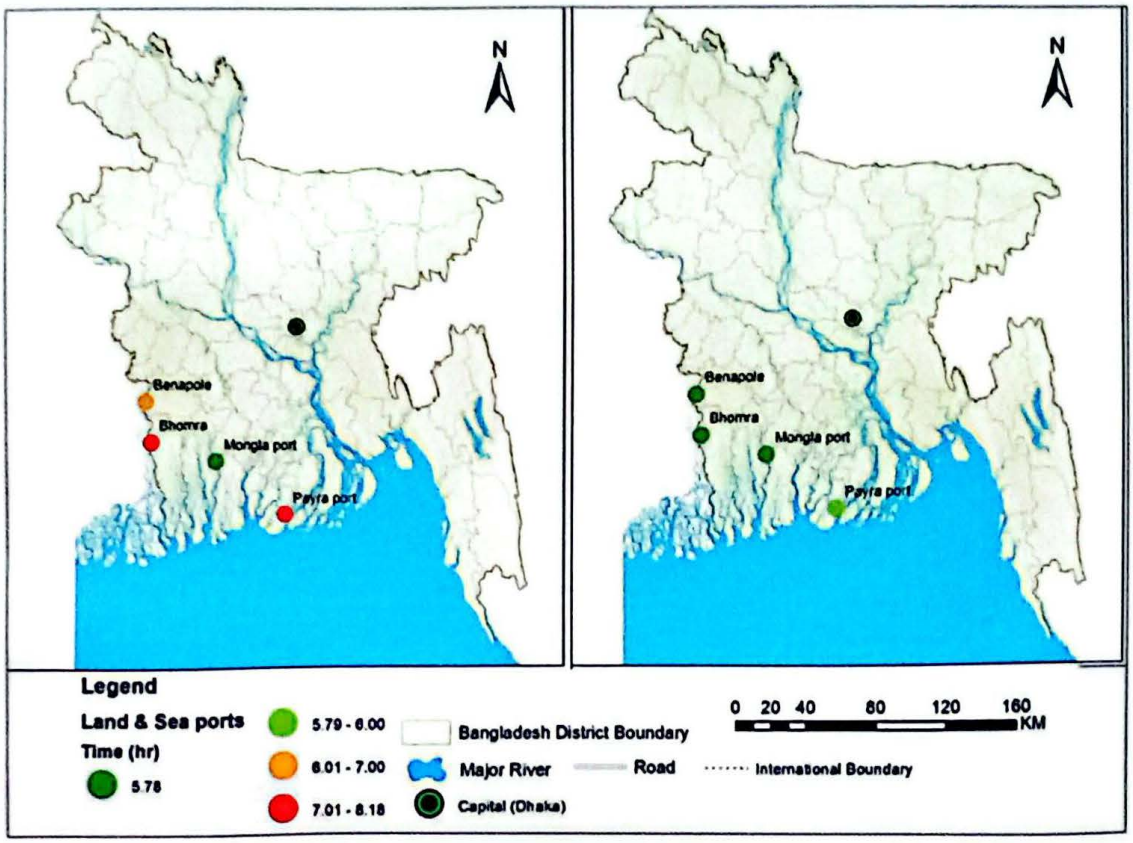
[174] This information was derived from the KII with UNO Shariatpur, and the Assistant Engineer of PMB. It was cross checked through an FGD with truck union of Shariatpur.
[175] Ashikur Rahman, and Bazlul Haque Khondker, "Economic Cost-Benefit Analysis: Padma Bridge Project-Bangladesh Priorities," Copenhagen Consensus Center (2016).
[176] Rahman and Khondker, "Economic Cost-Benefit Analysis".

Figure 4.2 Connectivity to Ports from the Capital (left: previous scenario, right: present scenario)[177]



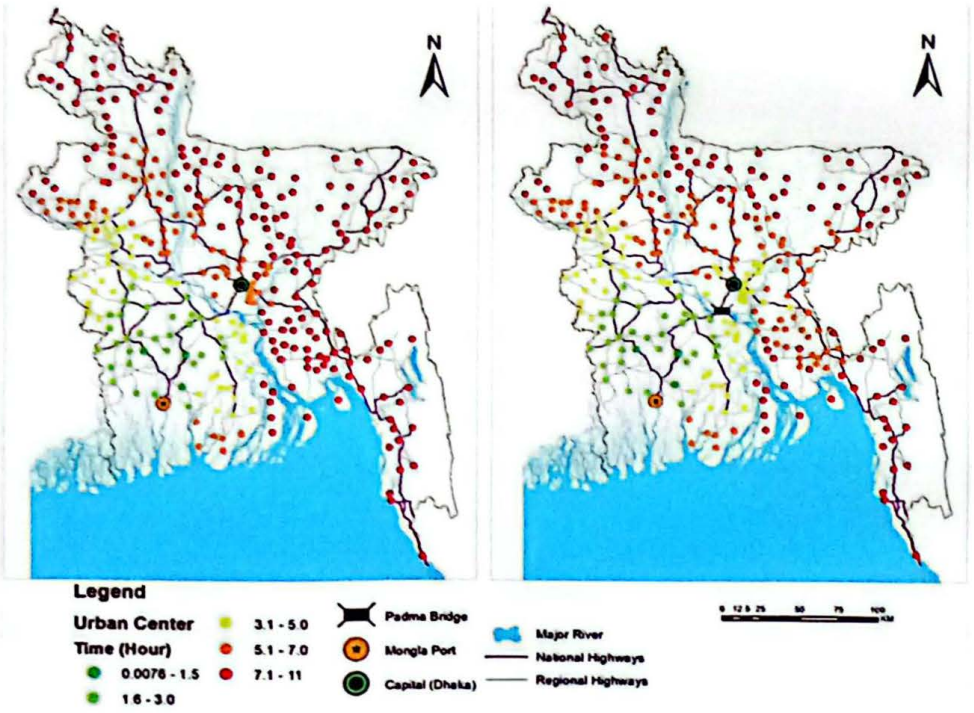
Moreover, the regional businesses have become stronger in the capital city. Improved connectivity with ports to the capital city will have a positive impact on regional trade, resulting in stronger economic growth. As a result, not only has the capital city become more accessible, but also the ports have become closer to the north-central cities, boosting regional connectivity between India and the adjacent north-central cities (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3a shows that the construction of PMB has led to reduced travel time between Benapole Port and cities such as Narayanganj, Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Munshiganj, Chandpur, Noakhali, and Feni. This reduction in travel time has facilitated greater regional connectivity, making it easier for businesses to export products which led to a rise in foreign remittances. Figure 4.3b depicts that almost 2 hours of journey time is reduced between the Mongla Port to Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Comilla and Chandpur while the industrial hub Narayanganj became closer to the Bhomra and Payra Port (Figure 4.3c and Figure 4.3d).

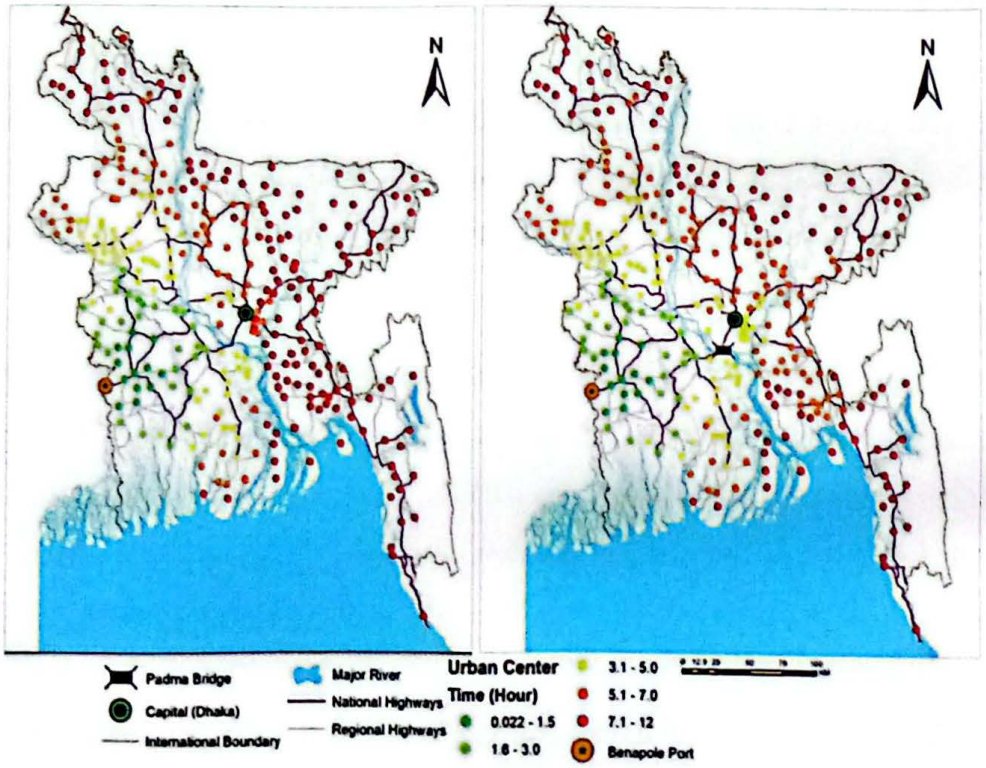
---

[177] Developed by BIP Research Team, 2023.

Figure 4.3 Connectivity to ports with the urban centres (left: previous scenario, right: present scenario; Four Figures labelled as 4.3a, 4.3b, 4.3c, and 4.3d) [178]

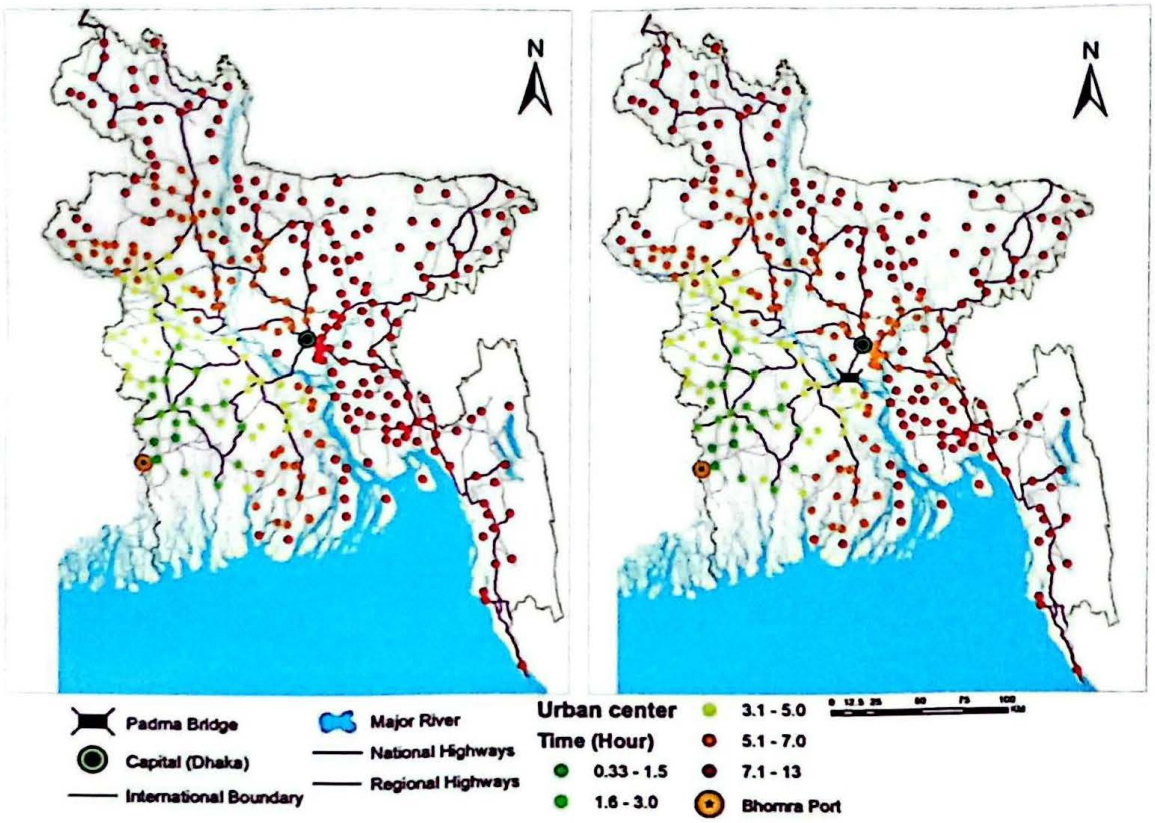


(4.3a)

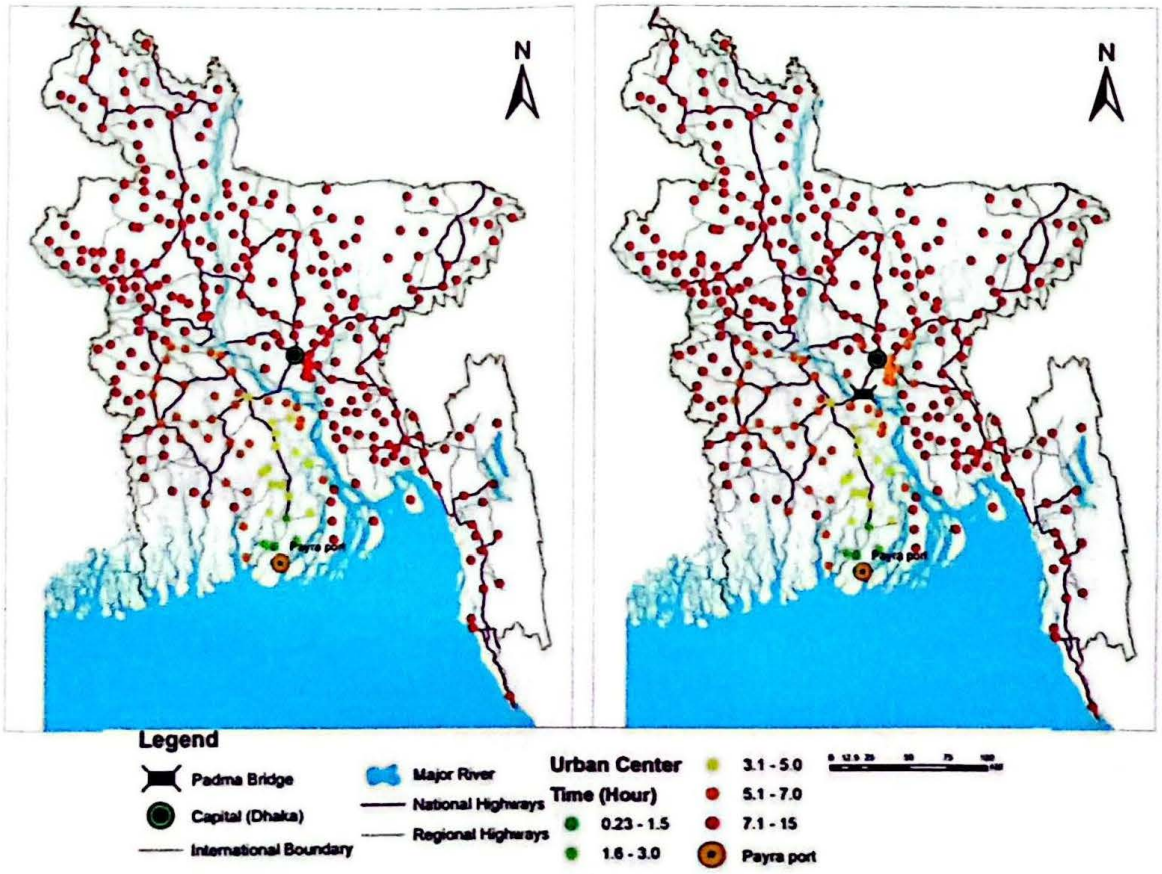


(4.3b)

[178] 4.3a, 4.3b, 4.3c and 4.3d are developed by BIP Research Team, 2023.


N
N
Padma Bridge
Capital (Dhaka)
International Boundary
Major River
National Highways
Regional Highways
Urban center
Time (Hour)
0.33 - 1.5
1.6 - 3.0
3.1 - 5.0
5.1 - 7.0
7.1 - 13
Bhomra Port

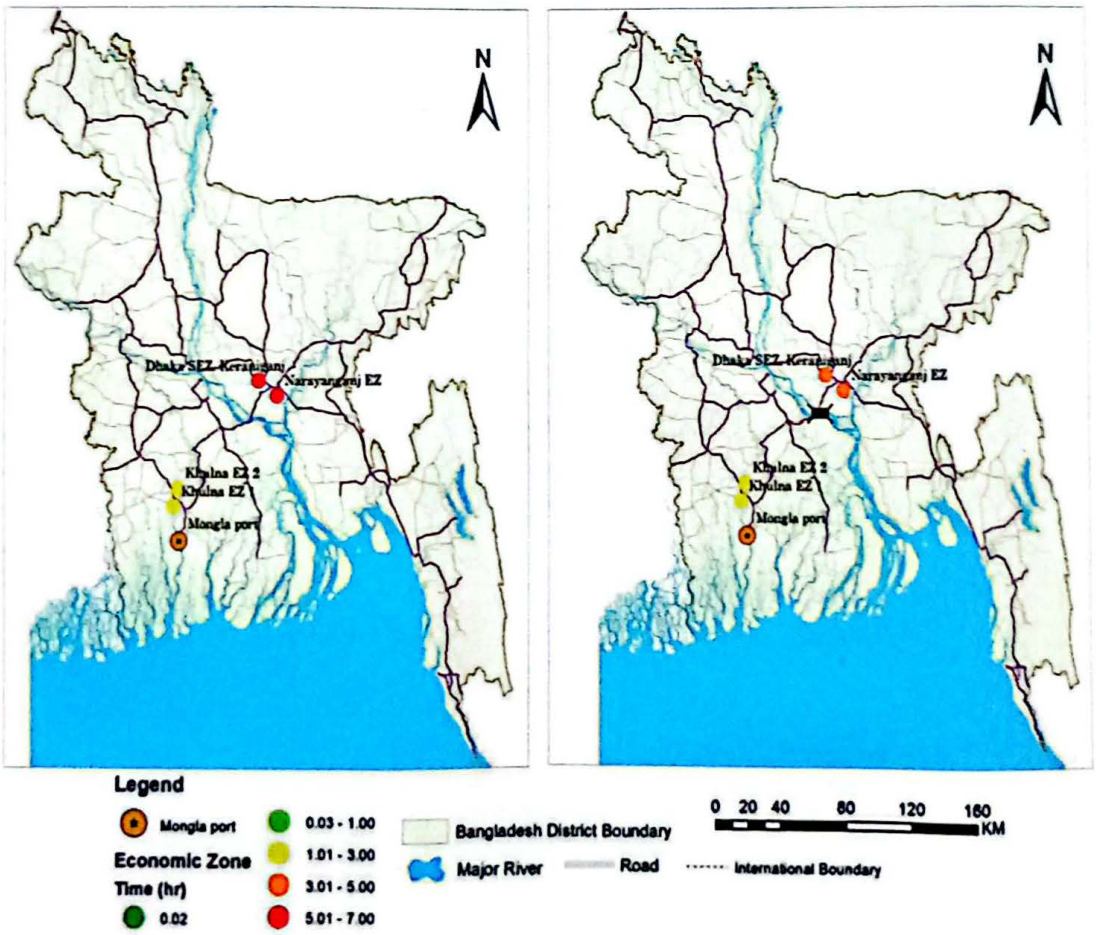
(4.3c)


N
N
Payra port
Payra port
Legend
Padma Bridge
Capital (Dhaka)
International Boundary
Major River
National Highways
Regional Highways
Urban Center
Time (Hour)
0.23 - 1.5
1.6 - 3.0
3.1 - 5.0
5.1 - 7.0
7.1 - 15
Payra port

(4.3d)

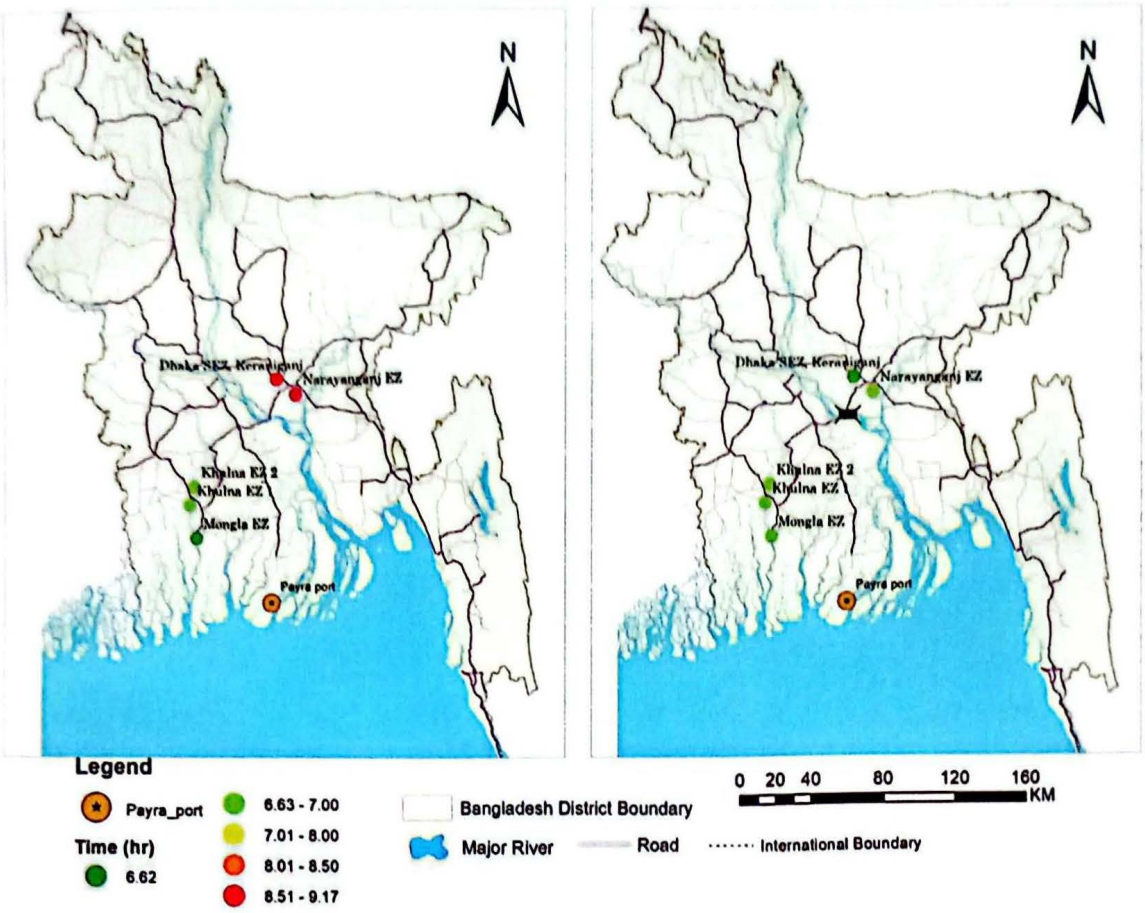
The bridge established the major economic link between the capital city and the southwestern portion of the country, bringing the ports, the capital, and the economic zones and ports closer together. For example, according to Figure 4.4, the journey time distance has been reduced by 2 hours between Mongla Port and adjacent economic zones (EZ) such as Dhaka Special Economic Zone (DSEZ) and Narayanganj EZ, while the reduction for Payra Port is more than 3 hours. It is also expected that the enhanced connectivity that was made possible by the PMB would have a beneficial effect on the regional trade in Bangladesh.

Figure 4.4 Connectivity to Economic Zones from the Ports (left: previous scenario, right: present scenario; Four Figures labelled as 4.4a, and 4.4b)[179]



(4.4a)

[179] 4.4a and 4.4b are developed by BIP Research Team, 2023.



(4.4b)

4.2.3 Rail Connectivity

The rail link project is a significant infrastructure development initiative that aims to improve accessibility between Dhaka city and the central and southwestern regions of the country. The study involves the construction of a new rail route that will be 212 km shorter than the existing Dhaka-Jessore-Khulna railway line. There is also an absence of direct roadways through the Tamabil-Sylhet-Sorail-Kanchpur-Dhaka-Mawa-Norail-Jessore-Benapole highway which will be resolved by the rail section of PMB. The rail route is scheduled to be established in four sections-Dhaka-Gendaria, Gendaria-Mawa, and Mawa-Bhanga junction via Padma Bridge and Bhanga-Jashore Bridge from September of this year to June 2024.[180] Furthermore, the new

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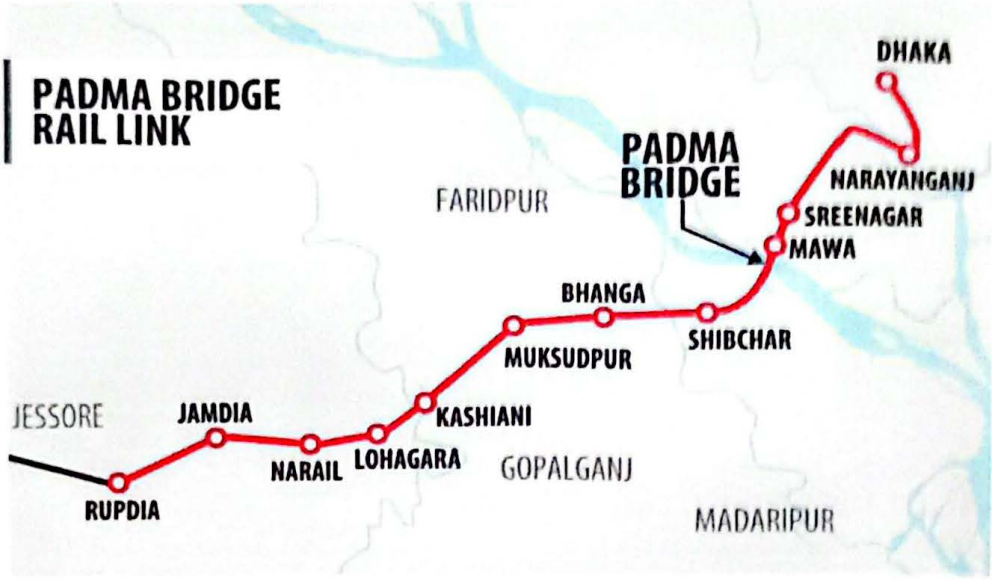
[180] "Padma Bridge Rail Link: 75% complete, on course for June 2024 handover," *Dhaka Tribune*, last modified May 10, 2023, https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/310798/padma-bridge-rail-link-75%25-complete-on-course.

rail link will create an opportunity to build a second line in the route to connect Barisal and the Payra Sea Port which will help to facilitate the transportation of goods and commodities at a cheaper cost to and from the port.

Figure 4.5 Padma Bridge Rail Link[181]



In summary, the rail link project is a crucial initiative that will improve accessibility and transportation between different parts of Bangladesh. The project will not only reduce travel time and distance but also provide a direct link between the central and southwestern regions of the country and Payra Sea Port. This will eventually boost trade.

4.3 Regional Connectivity

In addition to the road-rail connections between the capital and south-western parts of the country, the bridge will create connectivity of roads, railways, and energy transportation easing regional connectivity to India, Bhutan, and Nepal by linking to the Trans-Asian highway (N-8) and Trans-Asian railway (Figure 4.6).

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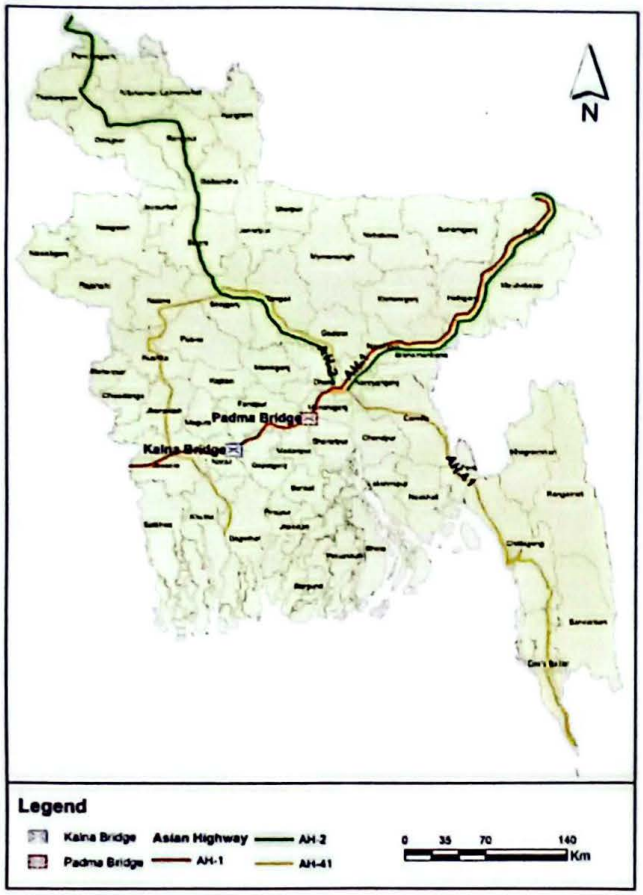
[181] "BR Announces Start of Padma Rail Link Project Work," *The Daily Gonokantho*, last modified July 12, 2018, https://www.gonokantho.com/en/details.php?id=54068.

Figure 4.6 Regional Connectivity[182]



In August 2009, Bangladesh joined the network conceived by the UN to set up regional connectivity among Asian countries via a highway system of over 145,000 km of roads passing through 32 countries.[183] Bangladesh is already connected to three Asian Highway routes, namely AH-1, AH-2, and AH-41, with a total length of 1,771 km. The route of AH-1 is Guwahati in Assam-Tamabil-Sylhet- Shaistaganj-Narsingdi-Kanchpur-Dhaka-Mawa-Charjanajat-Bhanga-Bhatiapara-Kalna Ferry Ghat-Narail-Jashore-Benapole-Petrapole in West Bengal.

Its length is 492km. The AH-1, connecting Assam with West Bengal of India via Sylhet-Dhaka-Narail-Jashore, had two missing links: one is the Padma Bridge and another Kalna Bridge in Narail. Of the two, the 690m bridge

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[182] Developed by BIP Research Team, 2023.
[183] Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary, "Padma Bridge: A Leap for Asian Connectivity," *The Daily Star*, June 24, 2022, https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/transport/news/leap-asian-connectivity-3054961.

construction in Kalna was comparatively easier, but the 6.150km bridge over the mighty Padma was always a massive task in terms of the magnitude of the work.[184] Hence, PMB makes the regional connection one step closer. With the completion of the Padma Bridge, the AH-1 will become the shortest route between two parts of India via Bangladesh.

Moreover, the Padma Bridge will pave the way for establishing a new route for the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) network, which aims to create an integrated railway network across Asia. It would be the fourth and the shortest TAR route, which would link India and Myanmar via the country and ultimately become a part of a network comprising 125,500 km of railway lines serving 28 countries. It will also reduce the travel distance of 63 km from Dhaka to Kolkata. Thus, the PMB will not only benefit Bangladesh by boosting internal connectivity but also strengthen regional connectivity, especially integration with Asia.[185] In particular, PMB is going to play a significant role in establishing regional connections with India and Myanmar.[186]

4.4 Impact of Improved Connectivity

PMB has facilitated the convergence of ports, economic zones, and the capital, leading to a transformative impact across multiple sectors (such as trade, commerce, agriculture and tourism).[187] According to research conducted by the Policy Research Institute (PRI), the construction of PMB has the potential to further accelerate the development of the country's various sectors. The bridge could boost the growth of the country's construction industry by 29 per cent, enhance the expansion of the agricultural sector by 9.5 per cent, and stimulate growth in the industrial and

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[184] Adhikary, "Padma Bridge".
[185] Interview with Professor Dr Niaz Ahmed Khan on October 05, 2022, and Professor Dr Selim Raihan on October 06, 2022.
[186] Interview with Professor Dr Delwar Hossain on December 11, 2022.
[187] Interview with the then UNO, Shariatpur Sadar.

transportation sectors by 8 per cent.[188] The following section has discussed in detail the impacts of PMB on various sectors.

4.4.1 Trade and Commerce

The improved connectivity between these centres and the capital city has opened up new opportunities for economic growth and development. The improved connectivity to the nation's capital will boost raw material production, manufacturing, and trade. Also, the bridge will cut freight transportation time to no more than a day, which will multiply regional trade by an order of magnitude. Hence, because of the construction of PMB, the country's GDP is expected to grow by 1.2 per cent a year and the Southern part's GDP can grow by 2.5 per cent through small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and commerce.[189] The total economic output value of the southwestern districts will rise by 73.4 per cent.[190] Capital inflow will increase into the southwestern zone causing expeditious activities in industries and commerce. Spurring the industrial revolution in 21 districts, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) sources stated that, around 500-1000 factories of various categories are projected to be established in the areas surrounding Barisal.[191] The city is expected to contribute 2 per cent growth to the national economy due to industrialisation caused by the bridge. It has also been recorded that over 100 companies have already bought land in Barisal BSCIC areas. Analysts also anticipated an industrial revolution in 21 southwest districts. Several small and large companies, such as manufacturing, ready-made garments (RMGs), assembly

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[188] Mamunor Rashid, Md Ripul Kabir, and Malik Mahdir Ibne Zaman, "Padma Bridge in Global Media and Boost to SDGs in Bangladesh," *Journalism and Media* 04, no. 02 (June 2023): 445–66, https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia4020029.

[189] K Tripura Hafsa and M M Hossain, "Prospects of Tourism in the South-Western part of Bangladesh: An impact analysis of Padma multi-purpose Bridge," *International Journal of Science and Business* 14, no. 1 (2022): 31–39.

[190] Md Abdul Jalil and Md Tuhin Mia, "The Role of Padma Multipurpose Bridge In The National Sustainable Development In Bangladesh," *Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities* 07, no. 01 (2021): 38–53.

[191] Masih Malik Chowdhury, "Padma Bridge: Vision to Reality," August 28, 2022, https://www.icab.org.bd/publication/news/5/498/Padma-Bridge:-Vision-to-Reality.

plants, and storage facilities are expected to expand along the bridge route in the southwestern region of the country. According to Asian Development Bank (ADB) projections, the direct investment surrounding this bridge will stimulate the regional economy. The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) has initiated the development of 17 economic zones in the region in an effort to expedite industrialisation and economic growth.

On the other hand, the Khulna Chamber of Commerce predicted that PMB would play a pioneering role in regional connectivity in South Asia by linking Dhaka with the ports of Mongla and Payra. The bridge will cut the existing 264 km distance by more than 100 km. By reducing travel time for commodities and improving communication between Dhaka and the south, the Mongla Port will help the economy expand more quickly. Currently, the Chittagong Port handles more than 90 per cent of the country's foreign trade with an annual commerce volume of around US$90 billion in 2021. Chittagong Port had an annual capacity of 2 million twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) containers in 2011, and by 2021, that number has risen to around 3.2 million TEU. Congestion in the Port of Chattogram will decrease as a result of increased cargo transit between Dhaka and the Mongla Port. By the end of 2021, nearly 20,000 containers had been moved to Mongla.[192]

4.4.2 Agriculture

The southwestern region is agriculturally enriched. Hence, this improved connection between the southwestern region with the rest of the nation will provide a major boost to the growth of local agriculture and industries. Farmers will benefit from improved infrastructure that enables them to transport perishable goods effectively and reduce production costs through efficient transportation and storage facilities, resulting in robust supply chains. The proximity of export zones will ensure the maintenance of product quality when exporting agricultural goods. Furthermore, the

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[192] Shelamony Hafsa, Khokaneswar Tripura, and Mohammed Mosaraf Hossain, "Prospects of Tourism in the South-Western Part of Bangladesh: An Impact Analysis of Padma Multi-Purpose Bridge," *International Journal of Science and Business* 14, no. 01 (2022): 31–39.

enhanced transportation system will unlock new economic prospects in the agricultural and industrial sectors.[193]

According to studies conducted by the PRI, the PMB has the potential to drive a remarkable 9.5 per cent increase in the agricultural sector in the backward regions of Bangladesh.[194] This growth will create abundant opportunities for both farming and non-farming activities, fostering agricultural diversification in areas affected by salinity, and facilitating trade between Bangladesh and India. Additionally, it will enhance the jute, textile, shrimp, dairy, and fish processing industries.

4.4.3 Tourism Industry

Over the last several years, the government envisions a prosperous future for the tourism industry in the country and has devised a comprehensive master plan to support its growth. By implementing strategic planning and fostering development, the government aims to elevate the tourism sector's contribution to the country's GDP from 4 per cent to approximately 30 per cent. A significant catalyst in this pursuit is the Padma Bridge, which is expected to have a transformative impact on the potential of the tourism industry in Bangladesh.

The southwestern region of the country offers abundant tourism opportunities. Notably, two of Bangladesh's three UNESCO World Heritage sites; the Shat Gambuj Mosque and the Sundarbans, are located in the Khulna division. These sites gained World Heritage status from the UNESCO in 1985 and 1997, respectively. On the other hand, Kuakata sea beach falls within Patuakhali district. Unfortunately, tourism in the country's southwestern district has lagged behind due to limited transportation options and inadequate facilities.

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[193] Forqan Uddin Ahmed," Bridge over Padma: A Success of Pride after Independence," *The New Nation,* last accessed June 18, 2023, https://thedailynewnation.com/news/326653/Bridge-over-Padma.%202022.

[194] Mamunor Rashid, Md Ripul Kabir, and Malik Mahdir Ibne Zaman, "Padma Bridge in Global Media and Boost to SDGs in Bangladesh," *Journalism and Media* 04, no. 02 (2023): 445–66, https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia4020029.

With the establishment of PMB, which will connect the southwest with the northern and eastern regions, there is optimism for a surge in tourist visits to these heritage sites. For example, the bridge will enable travellers from the capital to reach the mosque in just three hours, making day trips from Dhaka a viable option. Furthermore, the improved transportation facilitated by the Padma Bridge will likely lead to increased visits for both domestic and international tourists to the Sundarbans and Kuakata.[195] As mentioned in the Tourism Master Plan, the Bangladesh Tourist Board (BTB) and the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) have taken several initiatives to promote tourism centred around rivers.[196] Due to the construction of PMB, Padma Resort and Mawa Resort are now conveniently located for tourists to stay at and enjoy the Padma River and Padma River cruise.

4.4.4 Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation will be achieved especially in the southwestern zone at a faster pace because economic mobility will show an uptrend. According to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), the estimate of multiplier effects on investments on the PMB showed that it would increase the GDP growth rate by 1.27 per cent. It could also generate additional employment opportunities of 743,000 persons per year which correspond to 1.2 per cent of total labourers in Bangladesh.[197] In terms of regional and national poverty rates, PMB will bring reductions of 1.01 and 0.84 per cent respectively.[198]

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[195] Jahangir Alam, "Padma Bridge and Fulfilling Vision-2041: Perspective Realizing SDGs," 2022.

[196] Hasan Al Javed, "Padma Bridge to widen horizon of tourism sector," *The Business Post*, June 25, 2022.

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4.5 Conclusion

To summarise, the construction of the PMB has had transformative impacts on transportation and connectivity in the country, improving the quality of life for many people. It started paving the way for continued economic growth and development in the region by increasing regional connectivity, boosting exports, and increasing foreign remittance. It is apparent that the PMB will play a crucial role in accelerating the development of urban neighbourhoods in Bangladesh. The improved connectivity and increased investment are expected to create many opportunities for the growth of the local economy and the creation of new jobs. With increased investment and industrial growth, the integration of SMEs and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) will create multiple spill-over effects in generating outcomes. All of these will result in less urbanisation of megacities and decentralisation of the economy caused by reduced migration. The bridge will assist in maximising farm and non-farm growth possibilities, diversified agriculture in saline-affected parts, and availing inter-country and intra-regional trade between Bangladesh, India and beyond. Thus, the construction of this bridge represents a significant step forward in Bangladesh's efforts to modernise its infrastructure and promote economic development. The bridge stimulating economic activity leading to demographic changes will move the country more towards progressing on the SDG goals in the days to come.